

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

YOUNG ADVOCATES FOR FAIR
EDUCATION,

Plaintiff,

Case No. 18 CV 4167

vs.

Judge I. Leo Glasser

ANDREW CUOMO, in his official capacity
as Governor of the State of New York,
BETTY ROSA, in her official capacity as
Chancellor of the Board of Regents of the
State of New York,
MARYELLEN ELIA, in her official capacity
as Commissioner of the New York State
Education Department,

Defendants.

DECLARATION OF RICHARD ALTABE

1. I am a New York State Permanently Certified School District Administrator with a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from NYU and an MS Ed and an Advanced Certificate in Educational Administration from Brooklyn College. I have been an educator since 1982, when I began teaching science at Erasmus Hall High School. At Erasmus, I also served as the Chair of the Committee for School Improvement. In the summer of 1986 I was awarded an NEH summer fellowship to Harvard University. In 1988, I began a 30 year career of serving in leadership positions at Yeshivas and Jewish Day Schools in New York. At each of the schools where I have worked, I have had a specific focus on improving the secular education of the students.

2. In addition to my teaching and school leadership responsibilities, I have played an active role on governmental and civic authorities and panels that relate to education. In 1993, I

was elected as a school board member in NYC School District 27, where I served for four years. After the City disbanded the local school boards, I was appointed by the New York City Public Advocate to serve on the newly formed Citywide Council on Special Education, where I served for two years. From 1998 through 2002, I served on the New York State Education Department's Sensitivity Committee, which was formed to ensure that the statewide examinations did not reflect any bias in its questions. And in 2015 I was selected to serve on the State Education Commissioner's Advisory Council for Teaching. A significant focus of the Council was examining and providing feedback on the implementation of the Common Core.

3. In January of 2016 I was asked by PEARLS to organize a team of educational professionals for the purpose of creating a uniform, Common Core compliant, culturally sensitive secular studies curriculum, and to devise a program for the successful implementation of that curriculum in Chassidic elementary schools. It was understood that the uniform curriculum that we were asked to create and implement would adhere to New York State's Common Core standards.

4. To identify the most appropriate set of Common Core aligned curricular materials that were also sensitive to the cultural values of the Chassidic community, I met with representatives of Houghton Mifflin and Sadlier Oxford. Both of these firms are highly regarded by educators and their textbooks are utilized by a broad cross section of public and nonpublic schools. They advised me that they had previously worked with other cultural and religious markets to address similar concerns of those communities. For example, Houghton Mifflin's popular "Journeys" ELA series had a Common Core aligned version that was created for use in the Islamic market.

5. In designing and implementing a uniform, Common Core compliant, culturally sensitive secular studies curriculum for Chasidic yeshivas, it is important to understand the structure of the school day at these schools. It is a feature of yeshivas generally – and of the Chasidic schools for whom the uniform curriculum was designed in particular – that Jewish and Secular Studies are overseen by separate departments with separate administrative leadership and faculty. Jewish Studies at these schools occupies the morning hours of the school day, into the afternoon, while Secular Studies are taught during the afternoon hours.

6. The PEARLS curriculum team devoted substantial time and resources on the development of materials for the purpose of aiding teachers in integrating the Houghton Mifflin and Sadlier Oxford books into their classes. For this aspect of the work, PEARLS employed a team of four curriculum writers and staff developers who created teacher's guides that organized weekly lesson plans and gave specific guided instruction to teachers who would be utilizing the materials. PEARLS also employed a local yeshiva Principal to oversee the teacher training efforts at individual schools to allow for the successful adoption and implementation of the new, uniform culturally-sensitive, Common Core aligned curriculum. And PEARLS retained Generation Ready, a nationally recognized provider of educational professional development training to assist with the implantation and teacher training.

7. To date, this uniform effort that began in January 2016 has created Math curriculum guides, lesson plans and workbooks aligned with Sadlier Oxford Progress in Math 2009 Series for grades 1 through 6. PEARLS curriculum experts have also already begun work on the updated Sadlier Math - Next Generation Math Standards textbooks that were released just this past school year. A first grade teacher's guide is set for implementation this current school year, and the curriculum team expects to prepare similar guides for subsequent grades as well.

8. The PEARLS curriculum team prepared similar materials for the English Language Arts curriculum. Curricular materials have already been developed for grades 3 through 5, aligned with some Houghton Mifflin materials and supplemented with paired texts written by a literacy expert from Rhode Island. These materials were designed to also cover many aspects of U.S. History, Government and Civics. As with the Math materials, they contain weekly planning guides to help organize the unit planning. Each unit is completely aligned with Common Core Standards. The texts specifically feature practice in phonics, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, writing skills, reading comprehension, oral reading fluency and oral communication. All genres of literature are covered including poetry, fiction and non-fiction texts.

9. Since 2016, approximately 18,000 Houghton Mifflin readers and 15,000 Sadlier Math texts have been purchased by yeshivas in Brooklyn for use by their students. They have also purchased more than 22,000 of the ELA workbooks developed by PEARLS for use in yeshiva classrooms.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of New York that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed this 4th day of October 2018, at Far Rockaway, New York.


RICHARD ALTABE